grievances and make them to carry on weaving as a dependable occupation for their livelihood.

(v) Need to computerise Empoyment Exchanges in the Country

SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN (Karad) : Unemployment of the educated youth is the biggest challenge facing the country. While full employment is not possible without rapid industrialisation of the country, whatever few jobs that become available, the present state of Employment Exchanges, with their lack of transparency and delay causes great frustration along the youth. There is a need for urgent modernisation of these offices and opening of more offices, even in large tehsil headquarters. These offices must be completely computerised and all of them must be interconnected on the national informatics network. The staff must be increased and trained with career counselling skills.

I request the Union Government to look into the matter.

(vi) Need to sanction adequate funds for providng financial assistance to the drought affected people in Western Orissa

SHRI BHAKTA CHARAN DAS (Kalahandi) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, Kalahandi, Nuapara, Bolangir, Sonepore and Boudh districts of Western Orissa are facing continuous drought. As a result, farmers are migrating, selling their housholds and cattle lots for survival. Farmers have lost their capacity to go for the next kharif crop. Banks are not giving loans for seeds, fertilizers etc. The entire population of these drought-affected districts are suffering a lot without any means of survival. Government of India has seriously taken up the crop loss of Andhra Pradesh when the chronic cyclone damaged the coconut crop and adequate compensation was given to them. But the poor farmers of Orissa have not been given any assistance. Unless the farmers are given sufficient compensation for their crop loss and financial assistance for the next kharif crops, the lives of thousands of farmers and their families cannot be saved.

I request the Government to take up the matter of the hapless farmers of chronically drought affected districts of Western Orissa and direct the authorities to sanction sufficient funds for the purchase of seeds fertilizer and compensation for crop loss, etc., to the farmers.

(vii) Need to provide necessary assistance to West Bengal Government for conducting a fresh census of the Tigers in the Sunderbans Area

SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL (Joynagar) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, Sunderbans in West Bengal is the abode of the legendary Royal Bengal Tiger. The West Bengal Government has expressed doubt about the latest tiger census in the Sunderbans and suggested introduction of 'more scientific methods ' to derive the exact figures of the big cats in the Sunderban delta areas with the help of experts. The reconstituted Wildlife Advisory Board had observed that even though the rate of poaching had dropped sharply in the State, vigil had to be maintained just as earlier. It had also called for conducting fresh tiger census in the Sunderbans, as also the elephant census, from this year. The Board also suggested that pragmatic steps be taken to check elephant depredations in North and South Bengal Corridors to save the paddy fields, houses and tea gardens from attacks of the pachyderms.

While fully supporting the observations of the Wildlife Advisory Board, I request the Central Government to provide some expertise and render necessary assistance, financial and technical, to the State Board to conduct a fresh census of the tigers in the Sunderbans area and check the elephant depredations.

15.24 hrs.

FINANCE BILL, 1997

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : The House shall now take up Finance Bill, 1997. Eight hours have been allotted for all the three stages of this Bill. If the House agrees, we may have five hours for general discussion, two hours for clause-by-clause consideration, and one hour for third reading. Do the Members agree with this?

SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS : Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Chidambaram.

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): I beg to move :

> "That the Bill to give effect to the financial proposals of the Central Government for the financial year 1997-98, be taken into consideration."

Mr. Chairman Sir, a great deal has happened since the Budget for 1997-98 was presented in this House on February 28, 1997. The past is past. The economy beckons.

I appeal to the hon. members to look to the future with renewed vigour, confidence and hope.

The foundation of this Budget remains the Common Minimum Programme of the United Front Government and the broad objectives of this Budget are the same as for the United Front's first Budget presented in July, 1996. Among these are to accord priority to fiscal prudence, inflation control and macroeconomic stability, to ensure raid growth of employment through broad-based expansion of agriculture, industry and services, to focus on the needs of the poor and ensure provision of basic minimum services under a time-bound programme, to promote higher savings and investment, especially, in infrastructure sectors, to devote special efforts towards promoting human development.

When this Budget was presented in Parliament 69 days ago, it gave a strong boost to confidence in the Indian economy both in India and aborad. Inspite of a